

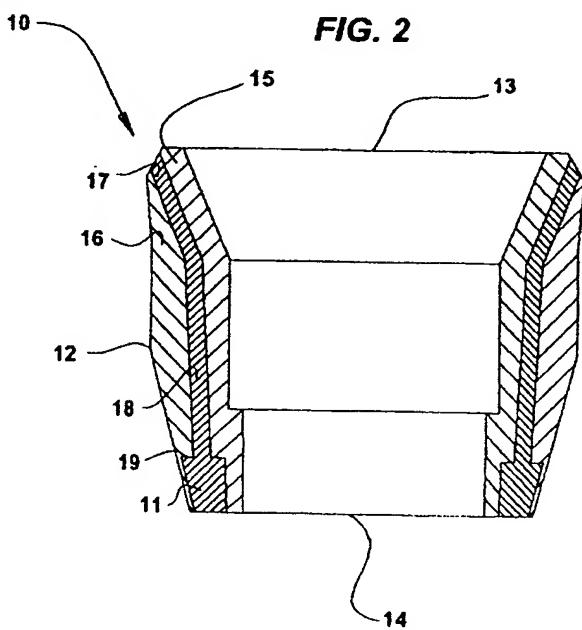
(12) UK Patent Application (19) GB (11) 2 382 364 (13) A

(43) Date of A Publication 28.05.2003

(21) Application No 0225807.7	(51) INT CL <sup>7</sup> E21B 33/126
(22) Date of Filing 05.11.2002	
(30) Priority Data (31) 09990383 (32) 23.11.2001 (33) US	(52) UK CL (Edition V ) E1F FKA F203
(71) Applicant(s) Polar Completions Engineering Inc (Incorporated in Canada) 4800 -27th Street S.E., Calgary, Alberta T2B 3M2, Canada	(56) Documents Cited US 4424865 A US 2305282 A US 2723721 A
(72) Inventor(s) Witold P Serafin	(58) Field of Search UK CL (Edition V ) E1F FJP FKA FKF FKG FKU INT CL <sup>7</sup> E21B 33/00 33/02 33/04 33/043 33/047 33/10 33/12 33/122 33/124 33/126 33/127 33/128 33/129 33/1295 Other: Online: EPODOC, JAPIO, WPI, TXTE.
(74) Agent and/or Address for Service D.W. & S.W. Gee 1 South Lynn Gardens, London Road, SHIPSTON ON STOUR, Warwickshire, CV36 4ER, United Kingdom	

(54) Abstract Title  
Packer cup

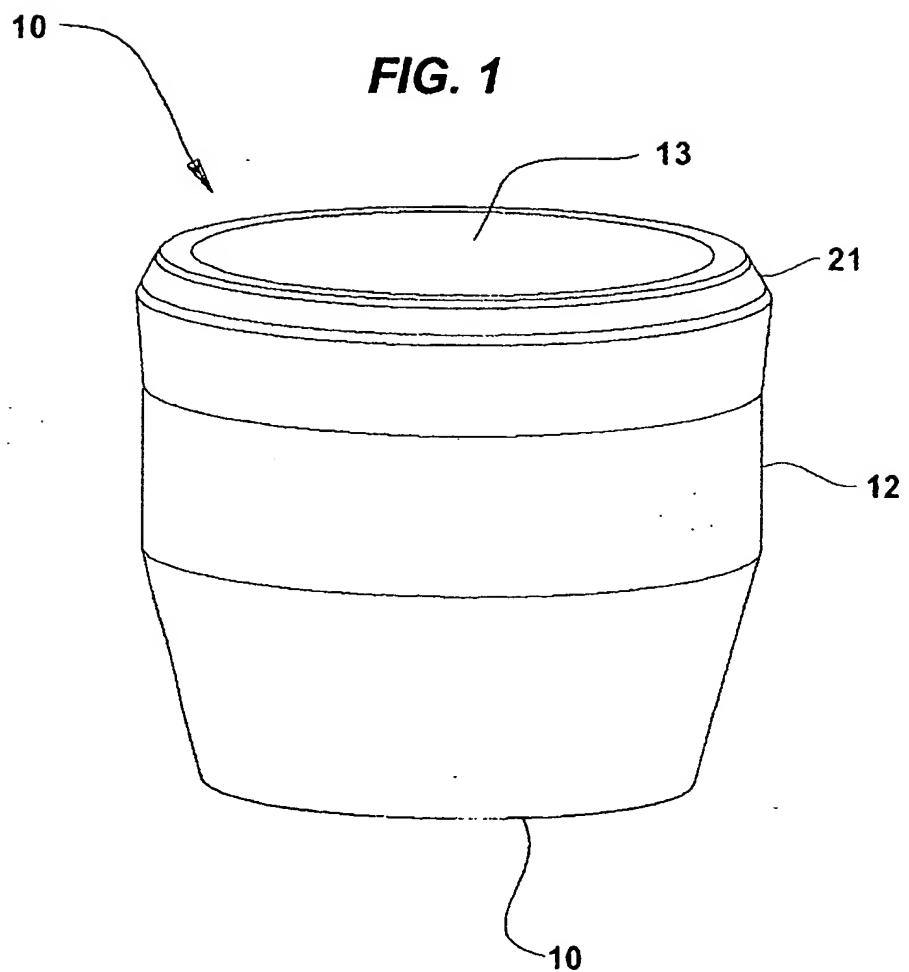
(57) A packer cup 10 for isolating a high pressure zone from a lower pressure zone comprises a base ring 11 from which an annular body 12 extends. An intermediate section 17 formed from interwoven high strength reinforcing plies 18, such as wires or cables, is attached to the base ring 11. The packer cup 10 comprises an inner and outer layer 15, 16 bonded onto either side of the intermediate section 17. The inner and outer layers 15, 16 are formed from an elastomeric or rubber material to form a unitary and flexible structure. The intermediate layer 17 acts as an continuous, but flexible reinforcement to allow the expansion and contraction of the packer cup 10. The intermediate section 17 further prevents the inner and outer elastomeric layers 15, 16 from extruding whilst under pressure.

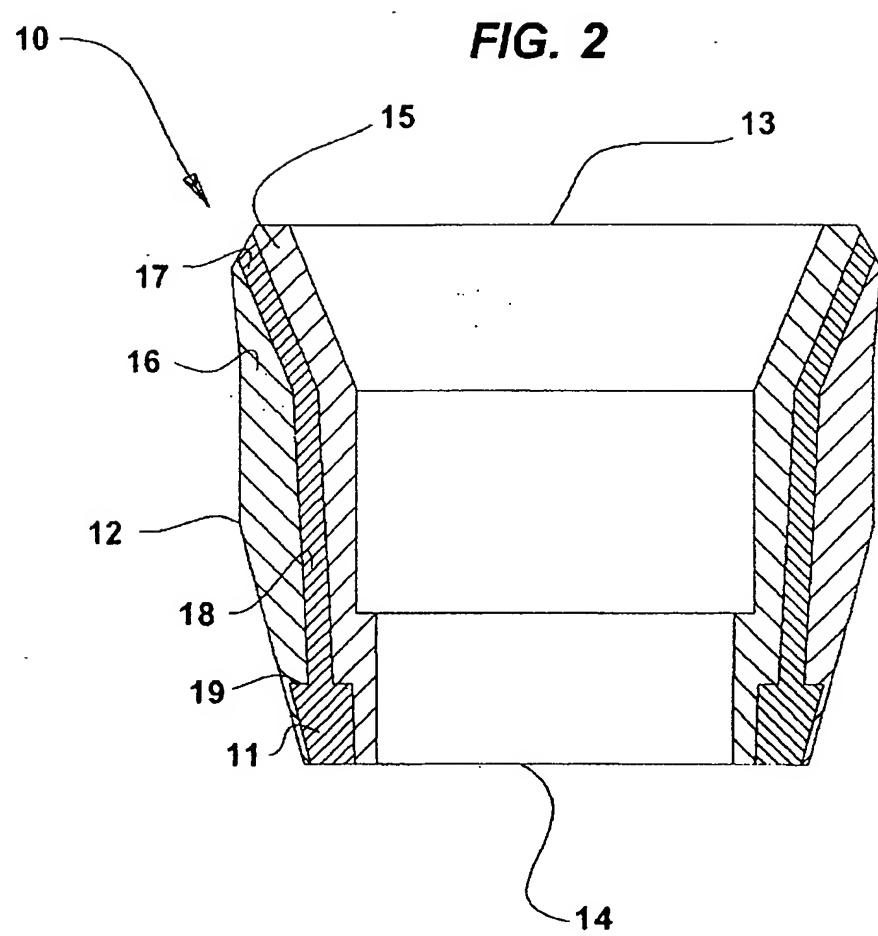


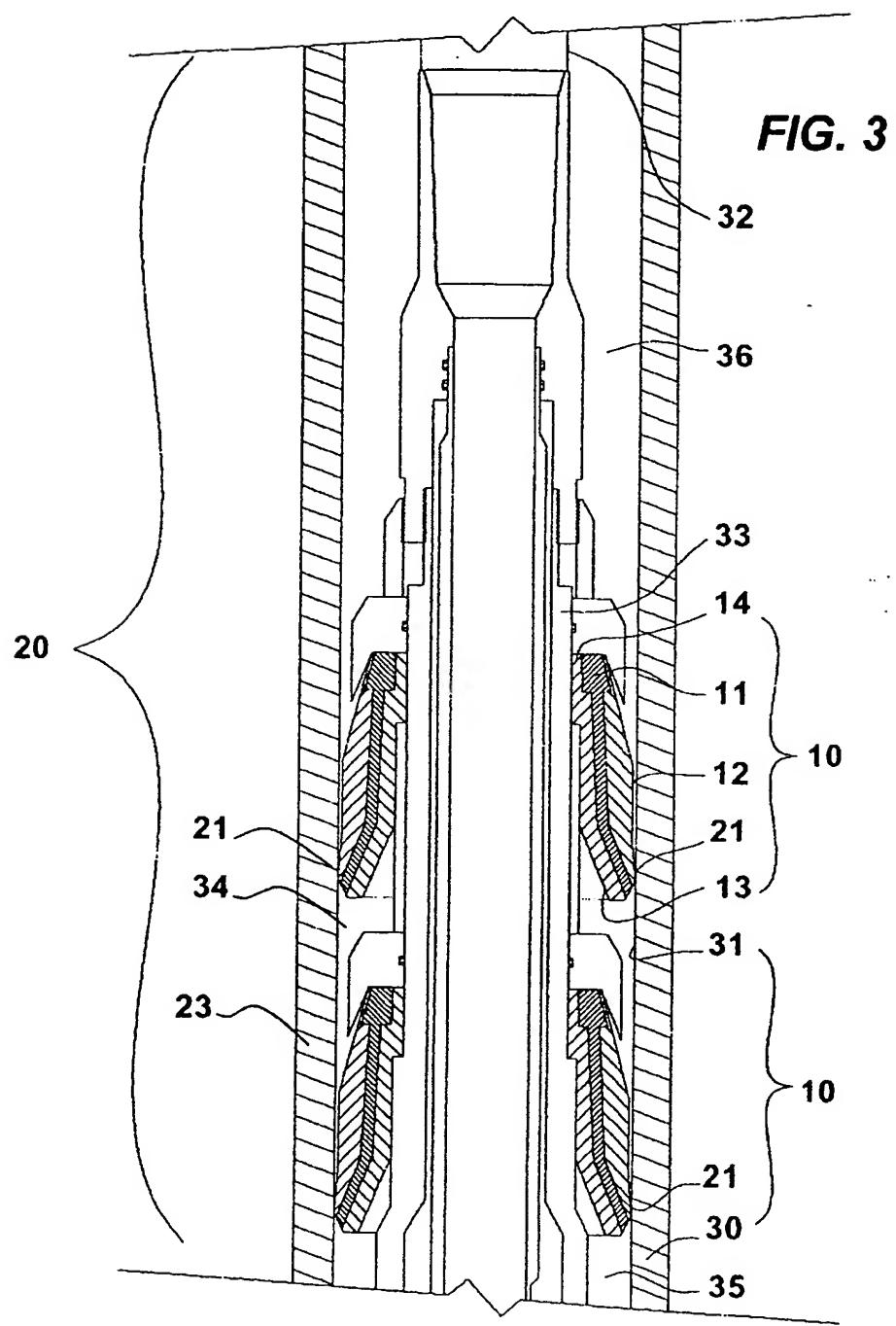
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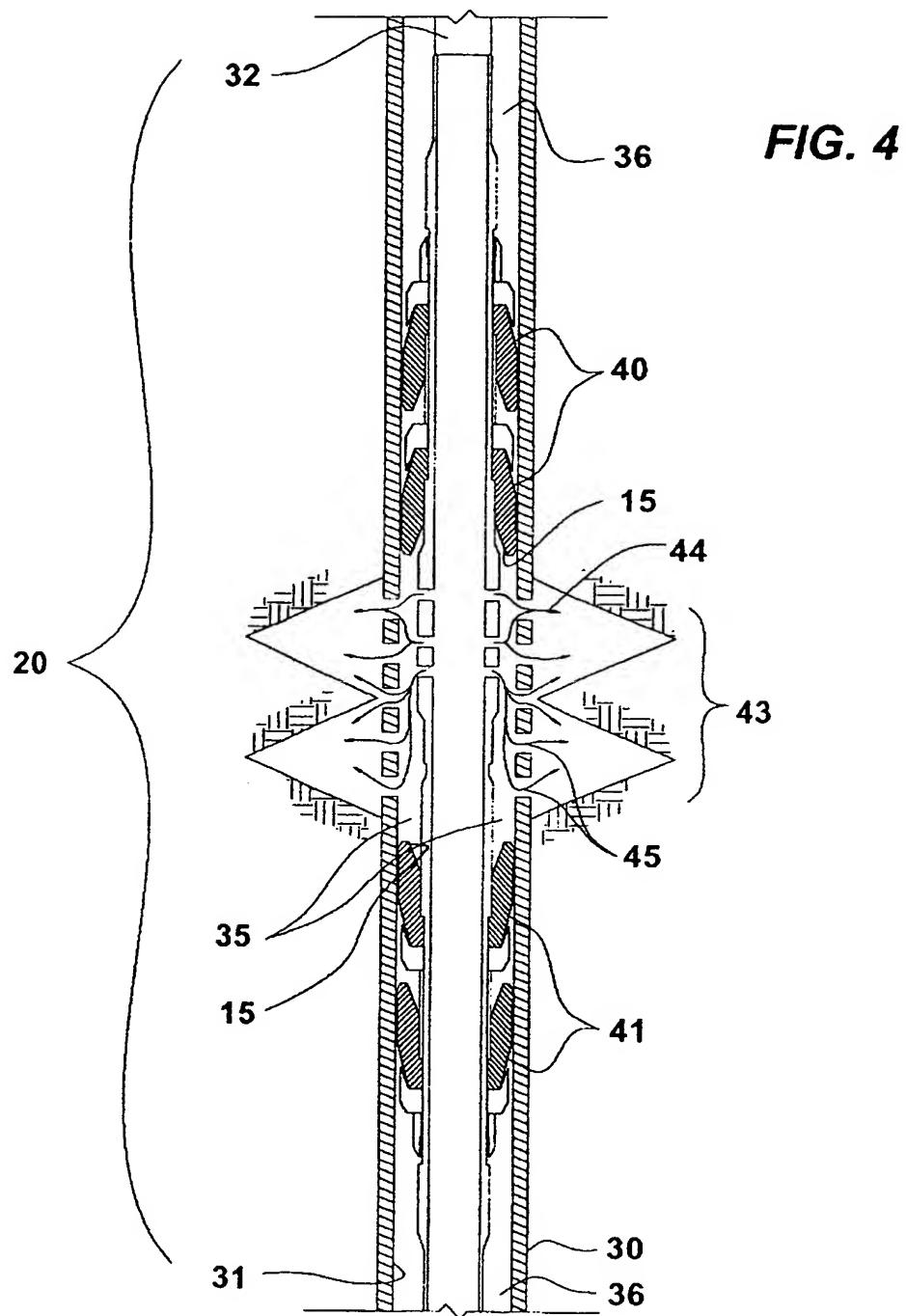
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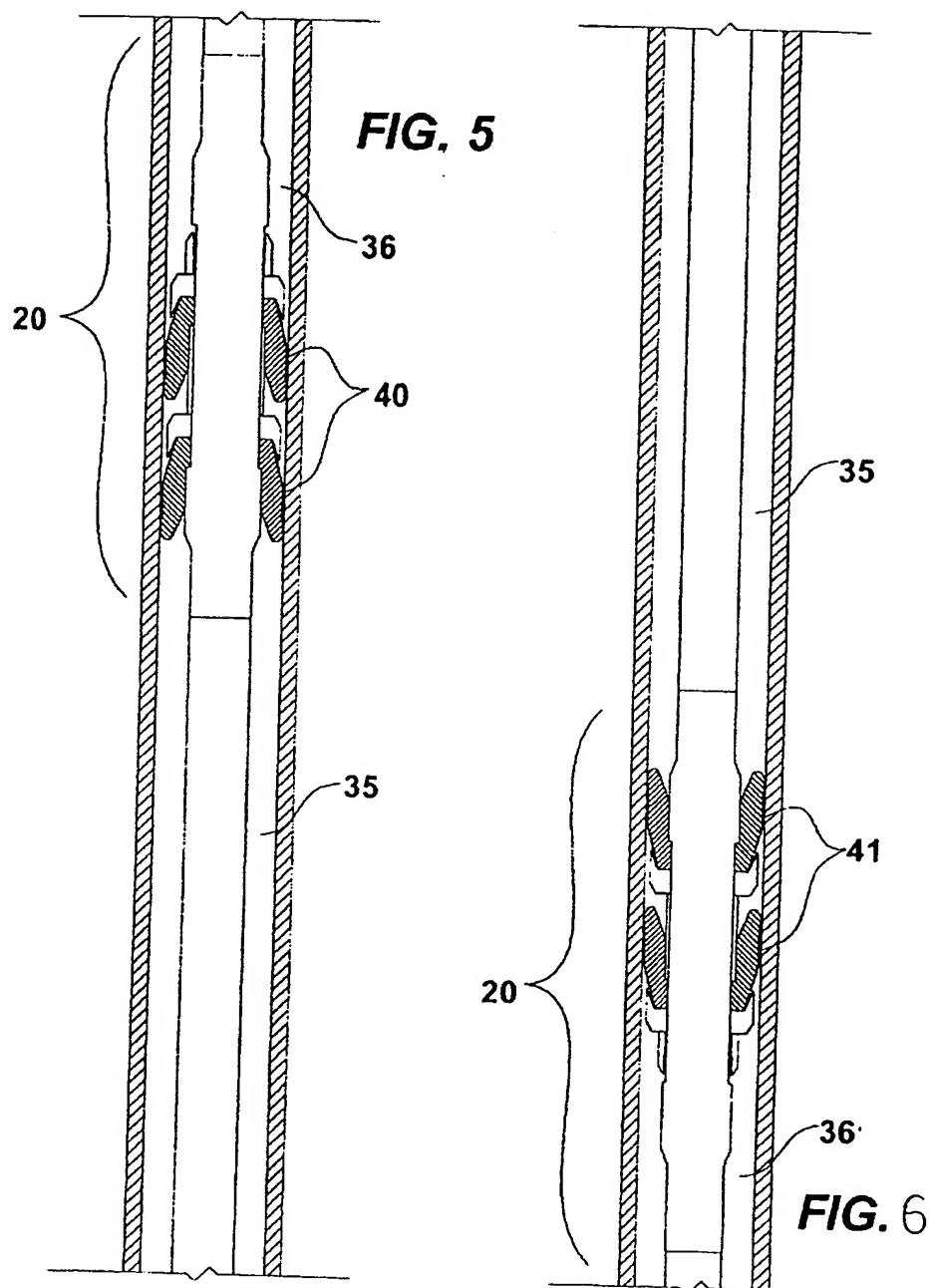
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## 1                   "COMPOSITE PACKER CUP"

2

3                   FIELD OF THE INVENTION

4                   The present invention relates to packer cups and more specifically  
5                   to packer cups used as seals in packer cup assemblies acting to isolate zones  
6                   within a formation by sealing a portion of the wellbore.

7

8                   BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

9                   Packer cups are known for use in hook wall packers and other  
10                  assemblies designed to isolate zones within a wellbore or to separate high and  
11                  low pressure zones within a wellbore. Typically, this type of operation is  
12                  performed for reservoir stimulations such as to stimulate a delimited portion of the  
13                  well with the introduction of acidic solutions to enhance reservoir flow. Often the  
14                  acidic solutions will further contain solvents, surfactants and anti-foaming agents  
15                  all designed to aid in leaching substances, such as calcium carbonate and  
16                  asphaltenes from the formation, resulting in the opening of pores to increase  
17                  production. These constituents, dissolved in the highly acidic solution challenge  
18                  the materials of construction of the assemblies, particularly the packer cups.

19                  Historically, to access a zone in a wellbore, it was necessary to first  
20                  "kill" the well by pumping a fluid into the well until sufficient hydrostatic pressure  
21                  was obtained to overcome the pressure of the formation and prevent fluids from  
22                  being blown out of the well. The wellhead was removed and the necessary  
23                  treating apparatus tied into the production tubing. Following treatment the well  
24                  was swabbed to re-instate production.

1                   A number of assemblies have been designed to replace the  
2 historical process of killing the well, accessing and treating the well and swabbing  
3 to reinstate production. US Patent 3,380,304 to Cummins describes one of the  
4 earliest assemblies wherein a hollow high pressure mandrel, slidingly engaged  
5 within a high pressure casing was provided. The casing was adapted to seal  
6 against the wellhead and the mandrel adapted to seal to the top of the production  
7 tubing below the wellhead. Thus, the mandrel could be extended or retracted and  
8 fluids provided to the formation, all the while protecting the wellhead from high  
9 pressure. Seal means, between the outer surface of the mandrel and the interior  
10 of the production tubing, were required to pump sand-laden fracturing fluids out  
11 through the assembly described.

12                  Mechanical packers and inflatable packers are known which can be  
13 positioned in a well and actuated to seal a zone in a wellbore. Other assemblies,  
14 such as hook wall, or cup-type packers are also known are inserted into the  
15 wellbore in their actuated state.

16                  The cup-type packers are inexpensive compared to inflatable or  
17 mechanically actuated packers. The cup-type packers use elastomeric sealing  
18 cups fabricated from elastomeric materials having metal reinforcing fingers  
19 embedded in the elastomer. The cup is mounted on a pipe or mandrel for  
20 insertion into the well. To effect a downhole wellbore seal, the cups are generally  
21 oversized compared to the inner diameter of the well casing so as to bear against  
22 the casing wall. The contact of the seal, against the casing, is further enhanced  
23 by the resultant force of differential pressure across the seal. Typically, as  
24 described in US Patent 4,424,865 to Payton Jr., the reinforcing metal elements  
25 are fabricated as fingers which extend upwardly into the elastomeric body from a

1 metal base plate. The fingers expand radially outward, rotating from the metal  
2 base as a result of increases in temperature and pressure, forcing the cup into  
3 engagement with the casing side wall.

4                   Conventional packer cups have a number of shortcomings. Firstly,  
5 as the cups are always "actuated" and in contact with the wellbore, the exterior of  
6 the cup is subjected to sustained mechanical abrasion against the casing side  
7 wall during insertion and removal from the wellbore. Typically, installation  
8 requires travel through a long bore which can result in removal of the exterior  
9 portion of the elastomer to the point where the seal is compromised.

10                  Secondly, packer cups are fabricated from synthetic rubber  
11 materials that have limited mechanical properties under elevated temperature  
12 and that are susceptible to repeated exposure to aggressive wellbore fluids.  
13 Further, the interior of the packer cup is subjected to highly acidic, organo-solvent  
14 based wellbore fracturing fluids which are highly corrosive and also destructive to  
15 most synthetic rubbers, eventually resulting in a breach of the elastomeric  
16 material, often failing due to extrusion of the elastomer through in the spaces  
17 between the reinforcing elements.

18                  Conventional packer cups are a compromise between chemical  
19 resistance, mechanical abrasion resistance and structural properties.

20

1

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

2                   The packer cup of the present invention comprises, in a broad  
3 aspect, an inner chemically impervious elastomeric layer, an outer abrasion  
4 resistant elastomeric layer and an internal interwoven fiber-reinforced flexible  
5 layer, preferably metal. All three layers are formed into a unitary composite  
6 packer cup capable of withstanding repeated mechanical insertion and removal  
7 from the wellbore casing as well as exposure to harsh wellbore fluids. Further,  
8 the composite inner layer provides additional reinforcement throughout the entire  
9 cup structure, for strength to resist extrusion and withstand elevated pressures  
10 and temperature commonly found downhole.

11                  Preferably the chemically impervious inner layer is Viton™ and the  
12 outer abrasion resistant layer is Nitrile™. The inner layer is an interwoven mesh  
13 of high strength fibers such as aircraft cable attached to an annular base ring.  
14 The cup has a body formed of the three layers which is shaped to flare upwardly  
15 and outwardly from the base ring and has an annular flange extending outwardly  
16 from the body adjacent an open first end for engaging the casing.

17                  When the layers are bonded, preferably by vulcanizing, into a  
18 unitary structure, the cup can be used in a packer assembly for isolating a zone  
19 of high pressure containing harsh chemicals. The base ring is sealing engaged  
20 with a mandrel for threading into production tubing and the annular flange  
21 extends outwardly into an annulus formed between the production tubing and the  
22 casing for sealing engaging the casing. The open first end is oriented to face  
23 towards the zone of higher pressure so that the differential pressure across the  
24 cup can act to further seal the cup against the casing.

1                   A plurality of cups may be used in each packer assembly, the cups  
2    being oriented to isolate the zone of interest. For isolating zones intermediate  
3    ends of the production tubing, the cups may be positioned uphole and downhole,  
4    with open ends facing or for other purposes such as isolating the wellhead from  
5    high pressure or cleaning perforations at the downhole end of a production string  
6    they may all be oriented uphole or downhole as the case may be.

7

8                   BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

9                   Figure 1 is a perspective view of a packer cup of the present  
10   invention;

11                  Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of a packer cup according to Fig.  
12   1, showing the inner and outer elastomeric layers surrounding an intermediate  
13   interwoven, flexible fiber reinforcing layer;

14                  Figure 3 is cross-sectional view of packer cups of the present  
15   invention installed in a packer assembly, the annular lip of the cup sealingly  
16   engaging the casing wall and the base ring sealingly engaging the tubing string;

17                  Figure 4 is a schematic cross-sectional view of a packer assembly  
18   of Figure 3, having packer cups isolating a zone of high pressure intermediate the  
19   production tubing;

20                  Figure 5 is a schematic cross-sectional view of a packer assembly  
21   having packer cups isolating a downhole zone of high pressure; and

22                  Figure 6 is a schematic cross-sectional view of a packer assembly  
23   having packer cups isolating an uphole zone of high pressure.

24

1                   DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

2                   Having reference to Figs. 1 and 2, a packer cup 10 of the present  
3                   invention is shown. The packer cup 10 comprises a base ring 11 from which an  
4                   annular body 12 extends and which enables mounting of the cup to a tool or  
5                   assembly 20 (Figs. 3-6). The cup body 12 has an open first end 13 having an  
6                   annular lip 21 and which has a radial extent which is larger in diameter than the  
7                   open second end 14. The second end 14 is attached to the base ring 11.  
8                   Typically, the radial extent of the open first end 13 is slightly larger in diameter  
9                   than an inner diameter of a wellbore casing string 30 into which the packer cup  
10                   10 is to be placed. As shown in Fig. 3, the smaller open second end 14 is sized to  
11                   snugly fit the base ring 11, which is fit into a packer cup assembly 20 for insertion  
12                   into a production tubing string 32.

13                   As shown in Fig. 2, the packer cup 10 comprises three layers, an  
14                   inner layer 15, an outer layer 16 and an intermediate layer 17, disposed  
15                   therebetween. The three layers 15, 16, 17 are bonded together, such as by  
16                   vulcanizing, to form the unitary packer cup body 12.

17                   In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the inner and outer  
18                   layers 15,16 are fabricated from elastomers which are specifically selected for the  
19                   contrary environments.

20                   The inner layer 15 is an elastomer. There are many elastomers  
21                   which may be selected for chemical and temperature resistance.. Viton™ is such  
22                   a chemically impervious synthetic elastomer. Viton™ is typically impervious to the  
23                   corrosive nature of the wellbore fluids used in stimulation and fracturing.  
24                   However, by comparison to other elastomers, Viton™ is relatively mechanically  
25                   weak and not particularly resistant to abrasion.

1                   The outer layer 16 is fabricated from a mechanically strong and  
2   tough elastomer. There are many elastomers which may be selected to  
3   toughness and temperature resistance. Once such elastomer is a synthetic such  
4   as Nitrile™. Nitrile™, which is relatively impervious to hydrocarbons and very  
5   mechanically strong such as for resisting abrasion. Nitrile™ does not have the  
6   chemical resistant properties of Viton™.

7                   As shown in Fig. 2, the intermediate layer 17 comprises a mesh of  
8   biased or helical, interwoven high strength reinforcing plies 18, such as wire or  
9   more preferably aircraft cable, attached at a lower end 19 to the base ring 11.  
10   The mesh 18, is typically a helically wound assembly so that the cup's annular  
11   body can flex radially and expand and contract slightly with the inner and outer  
12   15, 16 elastomeric layers. The plies 18 provide a substantially continuous  
13   structural reinforcement throughout a substantial portion of the body 12 of the  
14   packer cup 10. Examples of the manufacture and use of such mesh is known to  
15   persons in the art of inflatable packers. It is known to vary the thickness and  
16   number of cables, and helical build angle to affect their flexibility. Opposing  
17   helical winds of cable plies result in a criss-cross pattern which assists in avoiding  
18   extrusion of the inner layer 15 therethrough. An example of the selection of some  
19   of these parameters is set forth in inflatable packer US Patent 5,778,982 the  
20   entirety of which is incorporated herein.

21                   In a preferred method of fabrication, the intermediate layer 17 is first  
22   attached to the base ring 11 such as by brazing and then is embedded within the  
23   inner 15 and outer layers 16. The packer cup 10, so assembled, is then  
24   vulcanized to bond the layers 15,16,17 into a unitary structure, capable of

1      withstanding differential wellbore pressures across the cup, which can in the  
2      range of 15,000 psi or greater without suffering extrusion failure.

3           Having reference again to Figs. 2 and 3, the cup's body 12 has an  
4      annular lip 21 formed adjacent the first open end 13 for engaging the inner wall  
5      31 of the casing string 30. Further, the body 12 is tapered at the second end 14,  
6      about the annular ring 11 to allow insertion into the packer assembly 20.

7           As shown in Figs. 3 - 6, packer cups 10 are mounted to packer  
8      assemblies 20 having a mandrel 33 for threading into or otherwise suitably  
9      connection to a production tubing string 32, which is lowered into the wellbore  
10     casing string 30. The annular ring 11 of the cup 10 is sealingly engaged against  
11     the mandrel 33 while the annular lip 21 protrudes radially outward therefrom into  
12     an annulus 34 formed between the mandrel 33 and the casing 30. The protruding  
13     lips 21 of the packer assemblies 20 are squeezed into the casing 30  
14     mechanically, by an insertion and rotation of the production tubing 32. Once in  
15     position, the annular lips 21 seal against the inner wall 31 of the casing string 30.

16           The cups 10 are preferably oriented having the first open end 13  
17     directed toward a zone of higher pressure 35 and away from a zone of lower  
18     pressure 36 so that the differential pressure across the cup 10 further acts to  
19     drive the annular lip 21 of the cup 10 to seal against the inner wall 31 of the  
20     casing 30.

21           Fig. 4 illustrates one embodiment of a packer assembly 20 having  
22     uphole and downhole packer cups 40, 41 which act to isolate an intermediate  
23     zone of higher pressure 35 between the cups 40, 41. This configuration of packer  
24     assembly 20 is typically used in high pressure acid stimulation of delimited  
25     portions of the formation 43 and is used to penetrate through a plurality of

1 wellbore casing perforations 45 to dissolve blockages and increase reservoir  
2 flow. In such an embodiment, the outer layer 16 of the cups 40,41 is subjected to  
3 abrasion during insertion while the inner layer 15 of each cup 40,41 is exposed to  
4 corrosive stimulation fluids 44.

5 Similarly, Figs 5 and 6 illustrate alternate and simple embodiments  
6 of assemblies employing the invention, each utilizing a single set of packer cups  
7 10 in a packer assembly 20 for isolating a downhole or uphole zone of higher  
8 pressure, respectively.

1                   THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN  
2                   EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS  
3                   FOLLOWS:

4

5                   1. An improved packer cup comprising:

6                   an annular base ring for mounting to a packer assembly which is  
7                   positioned in a wellbore casing to isolate a higher pressure zone from a lower  
8                   pressure zone;

9                   an annular cup extending from the annular base ring toward the  
10                  higher pressure zone and having

11                  an elastomeric inner layer, and

12                  an elastomeric outer layer; and

13                  an annularly extending flexible intermediate layer of reinforcing plies  
14                  of material disposed between the inner and outer layers, and mounted at a lower  
15                  end to the base ring, the inner, outer and intermediate layers being bonded  
16                  together to form a unitary, flexible structure.

17

18                  2. The improved packer cup as described in claim 1 wherein  
19                  the inner elastomeric layer is fabricated from a chemically impervious elastomer.

20

21                  3. The improved packer cup as described in claim 2 wherein  
22                  the chemically impervious elastomer is Viton™.

23

24                  4. The packer cup as described in claim 1 wherein the outer  
25                  layer is fabricated from an abrasion resistant elastomer.

26

1                   5. The packer cup as described in claim 4 wherein the abrasion  
2                   resistant elastomer is Nitrile™.

3

4                   6. The packer cup as described in claim 1 wherein the inner  
5                   layer is fabricated from Viton™ and the outer layer is fabricated from Nitrile™.

6

7                   7. The packer cup as described in claim 1 wherein the  
8                   intermediate layer is formed of multiple, biased interwoven layers of reinforcing  
9                   plies having upper and lower ends, the lower ends being fixed circumferentially to  
10                  the annular base ring.

11

12                  8. The packer cup as described in claim 7 wherein the  
13                  reinforcing fibers are metal wire.

14

15                  9. The packer cup as described in claim 7 wherein the  
16                  reinforcing fibers are aircraft cable.

17

1                   10. An improved packer cup for a packer assembly, the cup  
2 isolating a higher pressure zone from a lower pressure zone in the wellbore  
3 casing wherein an inside of the cup is exposed to corrosive chemicals and  
4 hydrocarbons and an outside to mechanical abrasion, the improvement  
5 comprising:

6                   -       an annular base ring;  
7                   -       an annular cup extending from the base ring and toward the  
8 zone of higher pressure and having,  
9                   -       an elastomeric chemically impervious inner layer, and  
10                   -       an elastomeric abrasion resistant outer layer; and  
11                   -       an annularly extending flexible interwoven fiber intermediate  
12 layer, disposed between the inner and outer layers, and fixed at a lower end to  
13 the base ring, the inner, outer and intermediate layers being bonded together to  
14 form a unitary, flexible structure.

15  
16                   11. The packer cup as described in claim 10 wherein the inner  
17 layer is fabricated from Viton™.

18  
19                   12. The packer cup of claim 10 wherein the outer layer is  
20 fabricated from Nitrile™.

21  
22                   13. The packer cup as described in claim 10 wherein the inner  
23 layer is fabricated from Viton™ and the outer layer is fabricated from Nitrile™.

24

1                   14. The packer cup as described in claim 10 wherein the  
2 reinforcing plies are metal cables.

3

4                   15. The packer cup as described in claim 13 wherein the  
5 reinforcing plies are metal cables.

6

7                   16. A cup-type packer assembly for positioning in a wellbore  
8 casing comprising:

9                   a mandrel for positioning in the casing and forming an annulus  
10 therebetween; and

11                   at least one packer cup, each cup having an annular base ring  
12 sealing engaged concentrically about the mandrel and an annular body for  
13 sealing against the wellbore casing for isolating a zone of higher pressure from a  
14 zone of lower pressure in the wellbore casing, the annular body comprising an  
15 elastomeric inner layer, an elastomeric outer layer; and an annularly extending  
16 flexible intermediate layer of interwoven reinforcing plies disposed between the  
17 inner and outer layers, the plies being mounted at a lower end to the base ring,  
18 the inner, outer and intermediate layers being bonded together to form a unitary,  
19 flexible structure.

20

1                   17. The cup-type packer assembly of claim 13 wherein the  
2                    packer is used for chemical stimulation at a zone in the wellbore casing and  
3                    wherein, for each cup:

4                         the inner, elastomeric layer is fabricated from a chemically  
5                         impervious elastomer; and  
6                         the outer layer is fabricated from an abrasion resistant elastomer.

7

8                   18. The cup-type packer assembly of claim 16 further  
9                   comprising:

10                         one or more uphole cups mounted at an uphole end of the mandrel,  
11                         each cup's annular body extending downhole from its base ring; and  
12                         one or more downhole cups mounted at a downhole end of the  
13                         mandrel, each cup's annular body extending uphole from its base ring, the uphole  
14                         and downhole cups' outer layers being resistant to abrasion during positioning of  
15                         the packer in the wellbore casing and the uphole and downhole cups' inner layers  
16                         being resistant to chemicals during higher pressure wellbore stimulation.

17

18                   19. The packer cup as described in claim 16 wherein the inner  
19                         layer is fabricated from Viton™.

20

21                   20. The packer cup of claim 16 wherein the outer layer is  
22                         fabricated from Nitrile™.

23

24                   21. The packer cup as described in claim 16 wherein the inner  
25                         layer is fabricated from Viton™ and the outer layer is fabricated from Nitrile™.

1                   22. The packer cup as described in claim 16 wherein the  
2 reinforcing plies are metal cables.

3

4                   23. The packer cup as described in claim 21 wherein the  
5 reinforcing plies are metal cables.

24. An improved packer cup constructed and arranged  
substantially as described in relation to Figs. 1 and 2 of the accompanying  
drawings



Application No: GB 0225807.7  
Claims searched: 1 to 23

16

Examiner: Richard So  
Date of search: 27 February 2003

## Patents Act 1977 : Search Report under Section 17

### Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance	
A	-	US 4424865 A	(PAYTON, Jr.). See whole document.
A	-	US 2723721 A	(CORSETTE). See whole document in particular 1, 2, and 8 to 12, and column 2 lines 24 to 40.
A	-	US 2305282 A	(TAYLOR et al.). See whole document in particular figures 1 and 2, page 1 lines 5 to 12.

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X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
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### Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC<sup>v</sup>:

E1F.

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC<sup>7</sup>:

E21B.

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report:  
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